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Statement submitted by Institute for Planetary Synthesis, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

People and commons: global partnership missing links

The environment, the economy and social relationships are interrelated aspects of sustainable development and what are increasingly being referred to as commons.

Commons are shared resources that naturally belong to collectives and provide the natural and social capital upon which all life depends. Therefore, where people have the jurisdiction to do so, they tend to be highly motivated to sustain their commons, and these commoners have developed countless initiatives to achieve this. A rights-based approach to sustainable development — based upon environmental protection and restoration, economic prosperity and social justice to benefit all people and the planet as a whole — would recognize the value of various local, regional, national and global commons. This would motivate people and form the strongest possible foundation for a global partnership for development.

Governments need the support of the people to equitably and sustainably manage various commons and undo their unsustainable patterns of production and consumption at local through global scales. Where Governments support people to take greater responsibility for their vital resources, they will: (a) motivate citizens and businesses to support commitments to sustainability; (b) engage citizens and businesses in being proactive about sustainability; (c) educate citizens and businesses about their consumption patterns and costs to the environment; and (d) generate equitable funding that reinforces healthy patterns of production and consumption through improved protection of various commons.

The incorporation of people and their commons in actions that benefit all people and the planet as a whole is the strongest possible foundation for global partnerships for sustainable development. It integrates sustainable local, regional, national and international development because all parties and initiatives reinforce one another.

Here are a few structural changes inspired by a commons approach: (a) achieving the internalization of environmental costs; (b) establishing rules and guidelines for the use and management of common resources; (c) creating incentives for sustainable development; (d) setting rents or surcharges on the use of common resources; (e) developing economic instruments that increase as the sustainability of the commons increase, with benefits accruing to people of the given commons. Thousands of initiatives can be found on the many websites dedicated to local to global commons (including www.onthecommons.org) and in the work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom.

Because they are dedicated to preserving the global commons for all people and the world as a whole, global commoners can integrate global partnerships for development.

We request Governments to create a panel of experts within the United Nations Secretariat to explore with experts on the commons ways to incorporate a commons approach into global strategies for sustainable development. The panel would report back to the preparatory committee for the Rio+20 conference to inform the preparations for that summit.